



Tongass Advisory Committee Meeting Summary

May 6-8, 2015

Ted Ferry Civic Center, Ketchikan, AK

The Tongass Advisory Committee (TAC) held its eighth meeting in Ketchikan at the Ted Ferry Civic Center from May 6-8, 2015. During the three-day meeting, the TAC achieved consensus on a comprehensive package of draft recommendations to advise the Secretary of Agriculture on developing an ecologically, socially, and economically sustainable forest management strategy for the Tongass National Forest. The TAC will reconvene after the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Forest Plan Amendment is released to review the analysis of their recommendations and consider possible changes to and/or additional recommendations. They also identified near-term implementation next steps and discussed the future role of the TAC.

The meeting agenda is available online, [here](#). The following summary provides a description of each topic discussed and the resolution (where applicable). Recordings of the TAC deliberations are available by contacting Liz Duxbury at lduxbury@merid.org. See Appendix A for a meeting participant list (including TAC members, staff, and members of the public who attended, both in-person and virtually).

Welcoming Remarks and Committee Updates

At the beginning of the meeting, Committee Designated Federal Official (DFO) Jason Anderson provided updates related to the Plan Amendment process, and allowed an opportunity for additional Committee updates, as described below.

Implementation Workshop

On May 1, 2015, a working group of the TAC met with Tongass National Forest staff in a workshop to discuss the draft implementation recommendations. The group received feedback from technical experts and leadership that will help inform the TAC's dialogue about further refining their recommendations. Notes from the workshop are available online, [here](#).

Analysis of a TAC Alternative

Jason Anderson alerted the TAC to the fact that there has been some confusion between the Committee's draft recommendations and the Forest Service (FS) Interdisciplinary Team

(IDT) interpretation for translating the recommendations into a Plan Amendment alternative for analysis. Part of the challenge has been due to time constraints that have not allowed for an iterative process between the TAC and the IDT. In order to accurately model the recommendations, the IDT will need some clarification. For example, in some areas, the draft recommendations refer to 10-20 acre opening sizes. Because the Agency's definition of clear-cutting is anything over two acre openings, that is how they are interpreting the language. The other option is to model as a commercial thin (CT). However, the treatment that the TAC is proposing is different than a clear-cut or a CT. Because the TAC is proposing creative prescriptions that the FS has never used before, particularly in non-suitable lands, it is causing difficulty in translation for modeling at the Plan level. The TAC acknowledged the problem, but also emphasized the value of having the FS utilize more sophisticated silvicultural approaches. Jason requested clarification on outstanding questions as soon as possible after the meeting so that modeling can be completed.

Leadership Remarks and Discussion

U.S. Representative Don Young described changes he has seen in communities in Southeast Alaska during his 43 years as a U.S. Representative. Early on, the communities were growing, with many young adults, but more recently the communities have been "dying" – businesses and youth are leaving the area. Representative Young expressed Congress' interest in the timber industry in the Tongass. He recognized the value of fishing, recreation, and tourism, but stressed the need for a steady supply of timber - young growth and old growth - to support a timber industry and to keep *year-round* jobs in the region. This is especially important for local school funding. He expressed support for the Sealaska legislation that was passed, and stressed the importance of continued management, including old growth harvest, on those lands. He urged the TAC to consider a proposal that will support a viable sawmill industry for Southeast Alaska through active silvicultural management on the Forest.

Robert Bonnie, Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), expressed his sincere appreciation for the difficult work and personal risk TAC members have undertaken to provide input to the Department. He described a shared vision of a path forward for long-term certainty for a viable timber industry and less conflict for environmental and other user groups. Under Secretary Bonnie recognized that in addition to the TAC's work for the Plan Amendment, the recommendations for implementation and monitoring will be crucial to an effective transition. He assured the TAC that the FS is listening, and is prepared to make changes and be held accountable. He recognized the Committee's concerns about time pressures, and encouraged the TAC to continue to be engaged throughout the Amendment process, through an iterative review after release of the DEIS and beyond. He also recognized the broader issues that the TAC proposed through the Purpose and Need Statement that they submitted in February. While the FS is not able to reissue the Notice of Intent to change the

Purpose and Need to include these broader issues, he assured the TAC that the FS is interested in those issues and is committed to working with the Committee.¹

Beth Pendleton, Regional Forester, Alaska Region, USFS, echoed Under Secretary Bonnie's appreciation for TAC members' time and engagement. She expressed excitement for the implementation recommendations and agreed with the need for a culture shift within the Agency. Beth is committed to working with staff at all levels to make the necessary improvements to affect change and encourage a collaborative approach, within the FS and with external stakeholders and landowners. She also expressed her commitment to local communities, and she underscored the importance of creating a strong, healthy region through economic diversification and job creation.

Earl Stewart, Forest Supervisor, Tongass National Forest, discussed the value of collaboration and the different approaches it will necessitate. He recognized the value of refocusing the Agency's efforts, functionally and financially, to take full advantage of the opportunities that the TAC has outlined. He expressed his willingness to lead the Forest to make the necessary changes to increase communication, engagement, and dialogue through all its planning processes.

Discussion with Leadership

The Committee expressed hope that their recommendations can and will be implemented. Addressing certainty for all users will necessitate accountability among FS leadership and staff. However, they emphasized that the FS is not alone in this endeavor – the TAC intends to assist throughout the transition to ensure its success, and to continue fostering constructive relationships with the FS and stakeholder groups. Ultimately, they want the FS to be successful in the transition, and to ensure that local communities benefit.

Upfront consultation with stakeholders - including scientists, conservation, industry, community members, adjacent landowners, and many others – is imperative. The type of collaboration that the TAC exemplified can serve as a model for what the FS can do moving forward. The transition will represent a learning process for everyone involved and will impact all aspects of management – how to be cost-effective and efficient, where and how to harvest, methods to improve wildlife habitat, etc. It will also require flexibility and new management approaches. For community survival and viability, the FS must be committed to ensuring access to all Forest resources, with timber being one of those resources. TAC members also highlighted the importance of the ecological integrity of fisheries and wildlife habitat and access to renewable energy for community stability. All of these offer

¹ Under Secretary Bonnie presented the TAC with a letter in response to the letters they submitted in February 2015. The letter from the Under Secretary is available online, [here](#), with the May meeting materials. The letters from the TAC are also available on the TAC website with the [January meeting materials](#).

opportunities for development of a multi-skilled local workforce with year-round jobs for communities.

As the transition is implemented, socioeconomic impacts will need to be tracked, and ecological effects of management will need to be closely monitored. This monitoring should then be used to inform active adaptive management on the Forest – learning from new approaches and making changes as needed. Many of the proposed changes, particularly in applying co-intent, will require experimentation. After-action reviews and adaptive management will allow the Forest to learn from experimentation and adapt in order to improve, and to embrace and replicate successes.² The TAC also stressed that investment in inventory, research and infrastructure will be important, especially early in the transition.

Recommendations Draft – Review and Revisions

The TAC reviewed the most recent recommendations draft, and members expressed how impressed they were with the drafting and editing, and the ability to meet their charter direction.³ Specifically, the draft recommendations achieve the goal of speeding the transition and reducing old growth harvest through creative prescriptions and land management changes. The draft document as distributed at the beginning of the meeting is available online, [here](#). This draft is based on changes made by individuals and small groups of the TAC that were tasked with specific sections after the March TAC meeting. Most of the review focused on changes to the non-suitable lands, including those outlined below:⁴

High-Value Fish Watersheds

To ensure the ecological integrity of fisheries habitat remains intact, the group suggested requiring the FS to conduct a timely internal review before allowing harvest in high-value fish watersheds⁵ to determine if additional mitigation is needed for watershed protection. This review process is different than the review that occurs during project planning – it would occur prior to developing a sale, with involvement by FS scientists and external stakeholders up-front, to determine if harvest should occur. The FS would then have the flexibility of applying additional standards and guidelines to protect the resource if deemed necessary.

² The process of rapid adaptive management (RAM) used by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game is an example that the Forest could use as a model for active adaptive management.

³ The TAC charter is available online, [here](#).

⁴ Additional changes were made directly to the recommendations document during the meeting, and can be found in the submitted recommendations document, available online, [here](#).

⁵ High-value fish watersheds are defined as the list of Tongass 77 (T77) watersheds that have young growth in them. The T77 watersheds were defined through a region-wide assessment that ranked each area based on values to fisheries.

The TAC recognized that the review process may reveal that, in a few places, watershed values may be best protected by avoiding harvest of some young growth acres altogether. To offset any loss of harvestable young growth acres⁶ they introduced the concept of “no net loss,” described below.

“No Net Loss”

In order to best protect wildlife, fisheries, tourism, recreation, archeological sites, or other resource values without reducing the young growth timber base, the TAC suggested the concept of “no net loss.” The concept would be implemented by giving FS staff flexibility to determine (through integrated resource inventory and/or review) the best areas for operating timber, and the best areas to protect for habitat or other resource values. If the FS determines the need to protect certain areas with young growth, those acres will be offset by additional old growth harvest in other areas that do not have high value for other resources. The young growth that is not harvested will then grow to achieve old growth characteristics, and be preserved in the long-term as old growth forest. Similarly, the old growth that is harvested will be brought into the young growth timber base as the next generation matures.

The TAC emphasized the importance of geographical considerations when determining replacement acres so that resources are clustered or grouped. Members clarified that the “no net loss” approach would be applied beyond the timeline of the transition – for example, there are areas of young growth that are still very young, and will not be proposed for sale during the transition period. If, in the future, a review determines that these areas should not be harvested, this flexibility will allow more acres for future old growth harvest (for small and micro-sales) to offset the protected areas.

Transition Economics and Investments

The TAC reviewed their proposed investment recommendations with Under Secretary Bonnie, and suggested investment opportunities to prioritize early in the transition. Members stressed that the first hurdle will be guaranteeing timber supply; therefore, a high priorities for early investment should be on stand level inventory (on-the-ground and growth model verification) to allow for greater predictability of future supply, and research (silvicultural practices and harvest techniques) to improve growth and harvest efficiencies. As young growth supply levels increase, export will likely offer the first opportunity for generating revenue, for example to Canadian or Hawaiian markets. Investment for local processing and domestic markets will follow – thereby driving innovation and increased

⁶ There are approximately 23,000 acres of young growth located within these watersheds, with the largest watersheds being Security Bay and Kadake Creek with about 4,000 acres each.

margins. At that point, retooling for the industry and research on products and markets will be more important.

The TAC stressed the importance of taking advantage of research that is already being undertaken by other landowners such as Sealaska and research labs regarding the unique conditions of Southeast Alaska. The current growth model system used by the FS, the Forest Projection and Planning System (FPS), is the same system that Sealaska currently uses.

The TAC also stressed the importance of finding ways to provide social and economic benefits from investments through creation of full-time, year-round employment based on community needs, for example, by integrating processing and infrastructure into the areas where people live (i.e., tied to the road systems and “working circles”) or developing a “value-added processing center” that could serve as a business incubator for the region. Since local communities are heavily impacted by energy costs, utilizing the waste-stream from such a facility could offer low-cost biomass heat and energy. As timber supply increases, the opportunities for biomass-generated power throughout the region will increase. In addition, such a facility could qualify for Power Cost Equalization, a source of funding for community facilities that helps offset power costs.

Implementation and Monitoring Council – A Continued Role for the TAC

The TAC encouraged the FS to take an active adaptive management approach – building off lessons learned to make changes to management approaches throughout the transition. A major component of this is the creation of an Implementation and Monitoring Council (IMC).⁷ The IMC, in coordination with FS resource specialists and other stakeholders, will conduct 5, 10, and 15 year reviews to determine if the co-intent objectives are being achieved. If the objectives are being achieved, the recommended management flexibilities should continue; if they are not being achieved, the reviews offer the opportunity for the IMC to recommend changes to management approaches and prescriptions. If changes are recommended during the 5 and 10 year reviews, it would allow time for the changes to be implemented before the end of the 15 year transition period. This review process will be particularly important in the non-suitable lands. The draft recommendations specify a one-time entry into many of these areas; however, if the 10 year review determines that co-intent is being achieved (i.e., habitat is improving, while increasing timber volumes), additional entries could be allowed.⁸

⁷ A draft concept note that outlines the roles and responsibilities of the Committee is available online, [here](#).

⁸ The TAC clarified that regardless of the decision to conduct additional treatments these lands would *not* become part of the timber base. The objectives of the original LUD/S&Gs must be maintained.

A subcommittee of the TAC will work on the structure and function of the IMC. Because the TAC is chartered for another year, the TAC can use this authority to co-create the IMC with the FS (probably initially as a sub-committee of the TAC, which enables participation by additional stakeholder groups not currently represented on the TAC). The long term goal is for the IMC to be empowered to hold the FS accountable, yet not be restricted by the guidelines of a committee chartered under the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA). The TAC recognized that the Tongass Collaborative Stewardship Group will likely be a valuable partner and resource for the IMC.

Old Growth Bridge – Trust, Accountability, and Certainty

The TAC discussed the desire for greater certainty for old growth supply – a definitive end of large-scale old growth harvest important for the conservation interests, as well as clarity and predictability on supply for the timber industry. For conservation interests, this certainty is important for their ability to support the young growth recommendations. In addition to a proposed end date for old growth harvest, they also proposed a limitation of where old growth sales could occur – specifically avoiding high-value conservation areas and watersheds.⁹ For the industry, this requires a commitment from the FS that young growth supply is forthcoming – meaning that the FS needs enough staff and resources to conduct a thorough analysis of young growth inventory, and then actually implement sales. Through the creative solutions offered by the draft recommendations, there is an opportunity to reduce old growth harvest five years sooner than had been anticipated, through the one-to-one volumetric trade-off between young growth and old growth; however, without young growth sales, this trade-off is ineffective. To increase accountability, some members suggested a statement that if young growth is not supplied, old growth will continue to be harvested. Rather than being viewed as a “threat” of continued old growth harvest, this could serve as a catalyzing agent for implementing young growth sales.

The group discussed a variety of different approaches to providing certainty for old growth bridge timber. Appendix B is a copy of the draft old growth bridge strategies that were presented for discussion at the beginning of the meeting. The group ultimately agreed upon the following components of the draft strategy, including:

- Bridge timber will come from the Phase 1 land base, and avoid conservation priority areas and watersheds;
- Demand for the period of the transition will be based on the number that the FS determines;

⁹ The high-value areas are defined as The Nature Conservancy/Audubon high-value conservation areas and Tongass 77 watersheds.

- Small- and micro-sales of old growth will continue into perpetuity;¹⁰ and
- The ultimate goal is to move out of old growth as soon as possible.

The TAC recognized that there will likely be another Plan Amendment or Revision during the transition period. Because of this, they discussed the importance of conducting reviews throughout the transition, starting as early as five years, to determine the rate at which old growth harvest is reducing and an economically viable supply of young growth is increasing.

Based on their discussions, the TAC developed an old growth bridge strategy that includes the principles that they agreed upon, areas of uncertainty that they hope to clarify during the first five years of the transition, and what can be changed based on new information. They recognized the five year review as a critical piece to the strategy – currently there is a lot of uncertainty regarding young growth supply, so the first five years will allow time for improving the young growth inventory, as well as learning about harvest techniques, net-down, growth models, etc. During this period, the FS would also be completing the initial planning (Gate 1 and Gate 2) for old growth sales – developing the unit pool for which old growth sales will be available during the transition. Ultimately the TAC’s goal is to create a high degree of certainty for everyone, including industry, conservation, and all other users and interested parties. During the five year review process, there will be a better sense of both the volume of old growth needed (based on young growth inventory) and where the old growth will come from (based on the unit pool).

Members expressed apprehension about the amount of work that the FS will be required to do during the first five years. However, the ability for them to complete the work will be improved by the implementation steps that are being proposed. Especially important will be collaboration early in the planning process (Gate 1) to determine where the unit pool for old growth should be placed. The TAC agreed that the entire transition will be a learning process, and the old growth bridge strategy that they are proposing attempts to reduce risk through checkpoints and “safety nets.”¹¹

Demand

The TAC acknowledged that the demand number for purposes of the Amendment will be set by the FS. However, they expressed concern about how this number may change over time. During the period of the transition, they stressed the need for the number to remain constant – if the demand were to change, that would affect the amount of old growth needed to ensure a viable industry through the transition. Following release of the DEIS, the TAC

¹⁰ Small-sales are defined as 1MMBF or less.

¹¹ The TAC’s recommended old growth strategy is available on page 12-13 of the [recommendations document](#).

will recommend a target for the transition period, based on analysis outcomes.¹² After the transition, on the other hand, both demand and targets should increase to reflect the available young growth timber and increased industry capacity, based on sustained yield calculation. The TAC stressed the importance of involving external stakeholders (e.g., utilizing the IMC) in consideration of an increase to the demand and/or target. This will help ensure that the calculations are based on the *future* needs of the industry and ability of the land base to support, as opposed to *past* installed capacity.

Finalizing the TAC's Recommendations

The Committee voted on the substance of the recommendations, based on language in the document and changes discussed at the meeting. The recommendations were formally approved by a consensus of all present members (14-0).¹³ The full package of recommendations is available on the TAC website, [here](#). The recommendations are still considered draft because the TAC will reconvene after the DEIS for the Amendment is released. At that time they will review the analysis of their recommendations and consider possible changes to their package and/or additional recommendations.

Under Secretary Robert Bonnie and Regional Forester Beth Pendleton expressed their support and appreciation for the Committee's work, recognizing the service that they provided to the USDA and FS. They both conveyed their desire to continue to engage with the TAC throughout the transition – through feedback on the DEIS to implementation and monitoring of the Plan Amendment. DFO Jason Anderson talked about how important the TAC's recommendations are for the Tongass. He emphasized the unique opportunity that the Committee provided for the Forest to create something that will work for everyone.

The Committee recommendations are being translated by the Tongass IDT to incorporate into the Amendment as an alternative. Jason Anderson stated that the TAC alternative will be included as the preferred alternative for the Amendment.

¹² Jason Anderson clarified that the FS conducts a demand analysis for every Plan Amendment or Revision. For the purposes of analysis for this Plan Amendment, the FS is using 46MMBF/year; this is the volume that the FS will compare against to determine when harvest is predominantly young growth. This number reflects the FS contribution to the overall demand of the region. Target refers to the volume that the FS is funded for and expected to produce, as mandated by seek to meet, and fluctuates each year.

¹³ TAC member Richard Peterson provided his vote virtually, through participation over conference line. Absent TAC member Woody Widmark was contacted after the meeting and expressed full support of the recommendations, reflecting consensus by all 15 TAC members. Alternate Jason Custer, while not a voting member, also expressed his support for the recommendations.

Public Comment

The Committee encourages members of the public to provide input through oral and/or written comment. Every TAC meeting includes a public comment period. Prior to the meeting, many written comments were received. All written comments are available online, [here](#). The following comments were offered in-person during the meeting:

Owen Graham, Executive Director of the Alaska Forest Association, urged the TAC to decline any proposal that would limit management on National Forest lands, specifically with regards to deadlines or volume limits for old growth harvest.¹⁴ He reminded the TAC that past Management Plans on the Tongass have never been fully implemented – the 1980 Plan had a target of 450MMBF, and only 60% of the volume was made available. Similarly, in the 1997 Plan the volume target was reduced to 267MMBF, and only 30% was provided. That was further reduced in 2008, with only 12% of the target volume implemented. Owen expressed concern that these implementation issues have resulted in the closure of multiple sawmills and the loss of thousands of jobs. He stressed that it is possible for the timber industry and other uses of the Forest to coexist – tourism benefits from the roads built by the timber industry; fish populations have not been harmed but actually have doubled; and wildlife populations are healthy, as demonstrated by deer hunting on Prince of Wales. He urged the TAC to consider delaying the transition until there is enough young growth to support the industry. In the meantime, he encouraged continuation of the current Forest Plan to allow the young growth to mature, and the industry to continue into the future.

Dan Bockhorst, Manager of Ketchikan Gateway Borough, spoke on behalf of the Borough Assembly.¹⁵ 97% of the land within the Borough, or 3.1 million acres, is Tongass National Forest land; therefore, management on the Tongass is of great concern to the citizens of Ketchikan. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the region was devastated by the loss of high-paying timber-related jobs, resulting in a 23% unemployment rate for Ketchikan. The economy in the region still has not recovered, which is evidenced by the lack of school enrollment in the region, with one in four desks empty in the schools and 40% of students on federally subsidized meal programs. Dan urged the TAC not to repeat the same mistakes of the past by recommending timber policy that will likely fail. The majority of young growth on the Tongass average around age 50-60 years, but to be economically viable, trees must reach 80-100 years of age. The Borough urges the TAC to reject the transition at this time, and reject any recommendations that will jeopardize the ability to restore a timber supply in the future. Old growth must continue, possibly as much as 30 years or more into the future, until young growth can substitute the supply.

¹⁴ Owen also submitted his comments in writing; they are available with the [April/May public comments](#).

¹⁵ Dan also submitted written comments on behalf of the Ketchikan Gateway Borough. These comments are available with the [April/May public comments](#).

Mike Sallee, Ketchikan resident and small sawmill owner/operator, compared small sawmill operators, such as himself, his brother, and Larry Jackson of Forest Products Enterprises, with large-scale manufacturers and pulp mills, such as Louisiana Pacific. He expressed that Louisiana Pacific ignored environmental considerations and mistreated their employees, ultimately leaving Ketchikan a “broken shell of a town.” Small operators, on the other hand, should have the opportunity to continue. Mike’s sawmill operates on less than 100,000 BF/year, mostly from salvage timber that is provided through 10,000 BF free-use permits. He provides wood for the classes at the local Totem Heritage Center, which produces paddles, masks, and totems, among other things. He expressed concern about the TAC’s recommendation to enter beach buffer, because that is where most of the free-use permit timber comes from. He also expressed concern about round log export because it limits opportunities for local small-scale processors. Mike expressed the value of keeping all timber in Alaska for the economies of local communities. He believes that on a small scale, the timber industry can and should continue at a sustainable level.

Dick Coose, Southeast Alaska resident and retired Forest Service employee, stressed the need to get away from politics in forest management. The transition is a political order from Washington, DC, which Dick believes is a waste of time and money because it is too soon to convert the Forest to young growth management. Instead, he believes the current Plan should be implemented as is, in order to ensure the industry and associated jobs will continue into the future. Doing so will keep roads open, which will help recreation. He stressed that timber management does not have a negative impact on fish. In fact, he stressed the importance of timber management for overall forest health – without harvest, insects, disease, and fire will have huge negative impacts on the forest. With harvest, on the other hand, tress will regrow naturally.

Chelsea Goucher, Executive Director for the Greater Ketchikan Chamber of Commerce, expressed her passion about how the transition will impact Ketchikan and Alaska as a whole, both on behalf of herself as a lifelong Ketchikan resident, and as a representative of 220 local businesses. She explained her concerns in terms of the triple-bottom-line – a diverse economy is incredibly important to the region, and that includes a timber industry. If transitioning to young growth at this time does not make economic sense, she recommends it be delayed. Local sawmills, such as Viking Lumber, are doing value-added processing, such as providing wood for pianos and guitars, but need more time to adjust to processing young growth. The need for skilled labor in the timber industry offers family-wage jobs and reasons for residents to stay in the region. Without these economic benefits, the social component of the triple-bottom-line is affected – a downturn in the economy results in an out-migration of residents, and alcohol and drug problems among many of those that remain in the region. Chelsea suggested that school-age children should see where lumber comes from and how it is processed. On the environmental side of the triple-bottom-line, she suggested that Southeast Alaska has the opportunity to harvest timber in a responsible and sustainable manner. This is in contrast to timber that is harvested in other parts of the world that may not have those same sustainable practices. Chelsea encouraged

the TAC to do something meaningful with this process that results in an outcome that can work for the triple-bottom-line.

Dale Pihlman, a lifetime resident of Southeast Alaska, was involved in the tour boat business throughout his career, at one point operating five vessels. His passengers noted that they came to Alaska to experience the wilderness quality and scenic grandeur. Dale expressed concern that the Forest Service has reduced its support for the tourist industry – for example, trails have not been maintained and cabins have been torn down. In contrast, the Forest Service allocates 30% of its budget on timber, yet it represents less than 1% of regional employment. Dale cited the specific example of Big Thorne, in which the Forest Service will spend \$57 million administering the sale, and only receive \$6 million in receipts, resulting in approximately \$50 million of taxpayer subsidies. He urged the FS to look at what is generating the most revenue on the Tongass, and adjust the budget accordingly.

Buck Lindekugel works with the Southeast Alaska Conservation Council (SEACC), whose mission is to “protect the special places of the world’s largest temperate rainforest, promote conservation, and advocate for sustainability in human use of natural resources.” Their goal is to ensure the “interconnected whole” of land, water, cultures, and communities remain for future generations. SEACC has been involved in Tongass planning for decades – they submitted an alternative for the 1979 Plan, and submitted a request for a seat on the TAC. Buck expressed concern that the TAC’s recommendations are premature. Following release of the DEIS, there will be an opportunity for informed public dialogue that will prompt the FS to look at a different kind of management. Buck referenced previously mentioned concerns about economics and the decline of the timber industry, stating that the decline is not due to environmental lawsuits, but rather is due to high operating costs and distance from markets. Tourism, fishing, recreation, and local art now represent the driving economic force that timber once was for the region. SEACC does support limited amounts of logging, for the small- and micro-sale programs, as long it is kept within the region (i.e., no export). However, Buck stressed the importance of being conservative with how to proceed, and focus on protecting these economic drivers. He also urged the Forest to protect deer habitat for hunting, and preserve carbon reserves as a buffer against climate change.

Michael Kampnich, long-time resident of Southeast Alaska, on Prince of Wales Island and in Ketchikan, stressed that resource development should always be built on a foundation of conservation. For the transition, this means that enough old growth needs to be maintained on the Forest to support ecological function. He believes this can be achieved while still supporting a viable timber industry; however, it will take time. The FS should begin working with local sawmills with small volumes of young growth that are available now so that they can begin to transition. Michael referenced previous comments that suggested that the timber industry has little significance to Southeast Alaska because it only represents 1% of the economy – on Prince of Wales Island; however, 10-20% of the economy is based on timber. He believes that there are ways to support local economies through a continued timber industry, while recognizing conservation needs. Michael supports the TAC’s

recommendations, and stressed the importance of the FS to transition its processes for all industries.

Sarah Campen is the coordinator for the Tongass Collaborative Stewardship Group (TCSG), an informal ad hoc interagency group that has focused on improving partnerships and collaborative land management for the past 7-8 years. She expressed interest in the TAC's idea for an Implementation and Monitoring Council, particularly for how to share risk and collaboratively manage the Tongass. Sarah offered that the TCSG may be able to provide some assistance to the TAC as they work through the implementation questions and challenges.

Wes Tyler, owner and operator of Icy Straits Lumber in Hoonah, has employed an average of a dozen Southeast residents throughout the years. His mill began with export of old growth, and has since transitioned to a focus on high value-added products and local markets throughout northern Southeast Alaska. His business runs on a supply of less than 1MMBF/year that is provided mainly through selective tree sales. Wes expressed concern about the transition, specifically for the northern part of Southeast Alaska – in that area, the timber grows slower, and therefore will require more time to transition, possibly up to 35 years before the timber is ready. He stressed that his mill requires access to wood to stay in business and keep staff employed.

Sara Cawley, a student from the University of Michigan School of Natural Resources and Environment, spent the past year conducting a natural resource management assessment on the Sitka Ranger District, which focused on evaluation of management and restoration work in the Tongass.¹⁶ Her team of students conducted an independent analysis, on behalf of the Sitka Conservation Society, which included surveys, interviews, and site visits throughout the Sitka Ranger District. They received 119 survey responses, including 65 responses that used participatory geographic information systems (GIS) to show areas of frequent use in the District. The surveys raised the question of how to balance multiple uses on the Forest – for Kruzof Island, fish and wildlife habitat were ranked as the highest priority, while harvest of forest products was ranked a low priority. The majority of respondents preferred thinning or no harvest at all. When asked about perceived threats, responses included logging and resource extraction, ATV use, and overuse. The research also involved questions about the transition, which revealed concerns from small mill operators about the viability of the transition (i.e., whether there is enough young growth volume), young growth markets and competition, and road maintenance. The team of students provided the following recommendations, based on the outcomes of their research: limit old growth logging in the Sitka Ranger District; provide new locations for firewood harvest; work with local mills to support and invest in restoration activities; cultivate strong communication and engagement throughout the community; and implement monitoring to enable adaptive management.

¹⁶ Sara presented a PowerPoint presentation about her research. The presentation is available with the May meeting materials on the TAC website, [here](#).

Members of the public were also given the opportunity to participate virtually via conference line. The following comments were offered via phone participation:

Larry Edwards of Greenpeace is a long-time resident of Southeast Alaska. He urged the TAC to vote no on their recommendations. He stressed that the impacts to the conservation strategy have not been taken into account, and without those considerations any monitoring efforts will be meaningless. He referenced the TAC's conversations about demand, stressing that the focus should not be on demand, but should be on how much can reasonably be supplied. No major projects are reasonable because of the environmental damage they will cause, as is evidenced by litigation on projects such as Big Thorne and Mitkof. Larry questioned the ability to provide supply for even small operators – therefore, regardless of size of operations, all mills must make the shift to second growth timber, with the exception of micro-sales and salvage that do not negatively impact habitat. To help the small operators, the older second growth should be dedicated to their operations, as opposed to larger-scale mills. For these reasons, Larry reiterated that the TAC should *not* make any recommendations.

David Beebe, representing the City of Kupreanof, expressed concerns about the potential of irretrievable consequences from improper forest management. He referenced a report from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG), which detailed the impacts of clear-cut logging on wildlife habitat. In 1993, the Alaska Board of Game urged the Forest Service to protect forests with old growth characteristics to provide long-term maintenance of wildlife populations. For the last 45 years, large portions of game management units have been severely restricted to subsistence hunting. For example, in 1961, Petersburg was ranked highest in hunter success, but in 2012, only 22 deer were harvested. This decline began in the 1960s when clear-cutting occurred on Mitkof Island, and despite the crash in deer populations, clear-cut logging has continued throughout Southeast Alaska. David urged the TAC to consider the impacts of even-aged management. He explained that ecological sustainability is based on systems that are diverse and productive, and current management is not working in an ecologically sustainable manner.

Rebecca Knight, long-time resident of Southeast Alaska, expressed the negative impacts of declining wildlife populations. Residents of Kupreanof Island must travel to Admiralty Island to hunt deer – those that rely on these subsistence resources most cannot afford this travel. Rebecca expressed concern that the TAC is in violation of the mandate provided by the Tongass Timber Reform Act (TTRA), because of their narrow focus on the timber industry. She urged the TAC to vote no on their recommendations, and protect subsistence hunting and the rapidly diminishing old growth resource.

TAC Reflections on Public Comment

The Committee took time to reflect on the public comments they received throughout the process, both in writing and in person. A major theme that the members reflected was the feeling of discontent from a diversity of audiences, which they interpreted as a reminder of

how difficult their task has been – finding middle ground that serves as a compromise for all interests and uses of the Forest. The TAC observed that through their deliberations, they have been very deliberate in addressing and incorporating public comment into their decisions. They provided the following as examples: improving wildlife habitat, protecting fish habitat, continuing old growth harvest for small- and micro-sales for small operators, incentivizing domestic production and consumption, and speeding up the transition while still allowing time for the industry to adjust gradually. The members expressed appreciation for the input, and a sense of encouragement that the public clearly cares about the Forest and its resources, and believe they will continue to be engaged. Moving forward, the TAC encouraged the FS to involve the public and interested stakeholders into planning processes and continue to consider their input, stressing to the public that the best kind of input reflects creative ideas about what *can* be done.

Next Steps

Implementation & Monitoring Council

- Erin, Andrew, Chris, Jaeleen, and Eric will work out details of the IMC and began immediate tasks during the summer
- Lynn will draft an overview of the roles/responsibilities of the IMC, and will be available for consultation as needed

IDT Translation

- Les, Lynn, Wade, Keith, and Erin will meet with a core group of the IDT on Friday, May 15 to discuss translation of the TAC's recommendations into an alternative
- Prior to the meeting, J will share a summary of the IDT's concerns with this group
- Questions regarding language should be directed to Les and Lynn; modeling questions will go to Keith and Wade; Erin will be on stand-by for any questions regarding the 2012 Planning Rule

National Planning Rule Federal Advisory Committee (PR FACA)

- PR FACA is meeting in Juneau August 4-6
- A subset of the TAC should attend – Andrew and Chris M have volunteered so far (Chris is tentative)

Next TAC Meeting

- Next full TAC meeting will be scheduled in Fall 2015, after release of the DEIS and during the 90 day public comment period (Note: September is a difficult month for many TAC members, so later is better, as long as it is still within the public comment period)

Communications

- Meridian will distribute talking points to the TAC for communication (this includes press releases, overarching principles, and key messages from the meeting)
 - Meridian will contact Senator Murkowski's office to schedule a meeting during the week of May 18-22 – Eric, Andrew, and Chris M will attend
 - Chris M will work with the governor's office to schedule a briefing – if the briefing is in Anchorage, Erin can attend, if in Juneau, Jaeleen can attend
-

Reflections on the Meeting

Key Messages

The TAC identified the following key messages that will serve as talking points for media, as well as the basis of a press release to be finalized by the co-chairs in cooperation with staff:

- The Tongass Advisory Committee (TAC) held its eighth meeting in Ketchikan at the Ted Ferry Civic Center from May 6-8, finalizing its recommendations to advise the Secretary of Agriculture on transitioning the Tongass National Forest (Forest) to predominantly young growth forest management.
- After nine months of discussions, the Committee developed comprehensive recommendations to help shift the Forest Service's timber management program from an old growth to predominantly young growth focus. Their overarching goal was to preserve resilient ecosystems and communities.
- Include TAC vision statement: *"Southeast Alaska is comprised of prosperous, resilient communities that have the opportunity to predictably use and benefit from the diversity of forest resources to achieve the cultural, social, economic, and ecological health of the region for current and future generations."*
- Members reflected on the time spent together, value of the relationships they've built, and importance of understanding each other's perspectives.
- The group challenged the status quo to make something better.
- The recommendations provide the opportunity to both the industry and communities.
- Members wish to express their appreciation for the Forest Service's participation and their willingness to listen to advice regarding cultural change.
- Recognize every stakeholder is taking risks and operating in a place of uncertainty.
- The recommendations address elements needed in the Forest Plan Amendment, as well as the complementary institutional, cultural, and economic changes needed to make the transition to young growth successful.
- Principal in their recommendations was the co-creation of an Implementation and Monitoring Council, the purpose of which is to serve as the mechanism by which

stakeholders support and help hold accountable the Tongass National Forest as it makes the transition to primarily young growth forest based management. Members believe the long-term success rests with this committee.

- The Committee will likely meet again this fall after release of the DEIS.

In addition to the key messages outlined above, the members recognized the importance of referencing the Committee charter and the overarching principles found within their recommendations. The TAC released two press releases to announce their recommendations: a brief statement from the Committee, released Friday, May 8, is available online, [here](#), and a more detailed press release with the finalized key messages is available online, [here](#).

In addition to press releases, TAC members will be meeting with members of the Congressional Delegation and the Alaska Governor's office. The TAC wants to ensure one-on-one communication with these key decision-makers, as they will be important to ensuring successful implementation of the recommendations. Specifically, they will work to schedule meetings with Senators Murkowski and Sullivan, Representative Young, Governor Walker, Lieutenant Governor Mallott, and Commissioner Myers.

Member Reflections

At the close of the meeting, TAC members and alternates shared individual reflections about the meeting and the process overall. Their comments reflected the following themes:

- Honor and privilege of working with a group that is high-functioning, honest, respectful, and mature
- Recognition that this is a rare opportunity and a huge breakthrough for the Tongass
- Pride in recommendations, excitement, and sense of hope about the opportunity that the recommendations provide for the future of forest management on the Tongass and the surrounding communities; paired with apprehension of whether the FS will carry forward the recommendations and implement them as envisioned – particularly the emphasis on collaboration to make it successful
- Acknowledgment that the group took into consideration all user groups – resulting in recognition that the livelihoods of the Tongass are intertwined rather than pitted against each other
- Appreciation for the knowledge in the group, and the willingness to teach, challenge and be challenged, listen, and learn from each other – ultimately resulting in creativity and willingness to take risks
- Sincere appreciation for the difficult work they all undertook, and the time and stress involved – from the early modeling efforts and discussions, to the work that still lies ahead in communication, implementation, and monitoring – and the importance of working together through it all

- Reiteration of the importance of providing recommendations that improve the future for local communities
- Recognition of the importance of diverse user groups continuing to collaborate and work with each other to move beyond conflict

Appendix A – Participant List

Committee Members in Attendance

Jaeleen Araujo
 Les Cronk
 Kirk Hardcastle
 Lynn Jungwirth
 Chris Maisch (*Partial attendance*)
 Brian McNitt
 Eric Nichols
 Keith Rush
 Carol Rushmore
 Erin Steinkruger
 Andrew Thoms
 Kate Troll
 Wade Zammit

Committee Members in Virtual Attendance (Phone)

Richard Peterson (*Partial attendance*)

Absent Members

Woody Widmark

Alternates in Attendance

Jason Custer

Absent Alternates

Robert Mills
 Chris Rose

Committee Staff (USFS/Facilitators)

Jason Anderson
 Karen Hardigg
 Connie Lewis
 Diana Portner

USDA/USFS Employees

Robert Bonnie
 Beth Pendleton
 Earl Stewart
 Meryl Harrell

Members of the Public in Attendance¹⁷

Matt Armstrong
 Tayler Balkem
 Len Barson
 Dan Bockhorst
 Sarah Campen
 Sara Cawley
 Peter Chaille
 Norman Cohen
 Laurie Cooper
 Dick Coose
 Jackie Durette
 Gretchen Fanske
 Chelsea Goucher
 Owen Graham
 Michael Kampnich
 Leila Kheiry
 Dan Kirkwood
 Chuck Kleeschulte
 Niel Lawrence
 Buck Lindekugel
 Dan Ortiz
 Chad Padgett
 Penny Pedersen
 Bob Pickrell
 Dale Pihlman
 Mike Sallee
 David Scott
 Paul Slenkamp
 Wes Tyler

Public in Virtual Attendance (Phone)¹⁸

David Beebe
 Larry Edwards
 Rebecca Knight

¹⁷ This list is based on members of the public that signed in at the beginning of each meeting day.

¹⁸ This list is based on members of the public that provided public comment over the phone.

Appendix B – Draft Old Growth Bridge Strategies

Note: This draft was presented to the TAC for discussion purposes only. The final version of this document is found on pages 12-13 in the [Final Draft Recommendations Document](#).

Old Growth Bridge Strategies

1.
 - Transition from old-growth to young-growth in less than 15 years by making more young-growth available for harvest and substituting Y-G for O-G on a 1:1 volumetric basis, using the annual timber target.
 - All large-scale O-G projects must be through Gate 4 by end of year 5.
 - Any O-G sale that has completed Gate 4 by the end of year 5 can be sold and operated till the end of time.
 - Provide enough staff and other resources in these early years of the transition to plan and get on the shelf sufficient O-G volume to ensure that the offered volume meets the determined target.
 - Provide enough staff and other resources in the first three years of the transition to complete a thorough analysis of young-growth and when it will be available for harvest.
 - Provide enough staff and other resources in years 3 and beyond to plan and get on the shelf sufficient Y-G volume to ensure that the annual offered volume meets the determined target.
 - O-G timber base is limited to Phase 1 lands outside of TNC/Audubon, T77 watersheds and Inventoried Roadless Areas.
 - A long-term annual O-G timber harvest that meets the demand of the small and micro-sale programs.
 - The Committee could not reach consensus on a total O-G volume cap and therefore has presented 2 options in its recommendations to be included as separate alternatives, one of 250MMbf and one of 1,000MMbf.
2.
 - Transition from old-growth to young-growth in less than 15 years by making more young-growth available for harvest and substituting Y-G for O-G on a 1:1 volumetric basis, using the annual timber target.
 - Any O-G sale that has completed Gate 4 by the end of year 5 can be sold and operated till the end of year 10.
 - There will be full review of this approach completed at the end of year 5 to determine if the timber volume targets beyond year 10 can likely be met with Y-G. If it is determined that the target cannot be met only with Y-G, additional O-G will be offered to fill the gap.
 - Provide enough staff and other resources in these early years of the transition to plan and get on the shelf sufficient O-G volume to ensure that the offered volume meets the determined target.
 - Provide enough staff and other resources in the first three years of the transition to complete a thorough analysis of young-growth and when it will be available for harvest.
 - Provide enough staff and other resources in years 3 and beyond to plan and get on the shelf sufficient Y-G volume to ensure that the annual offered volume meets the determined target.

- O-G timber base is limited to Phase 1 lands outside of TNC/Audubon, T77 watersheds and Inventoried Roadless Areas.
- A long-term annual O-G timber harvest that meets the demand of the small and micro-sale programs.
- The Committee could not reach consensus on the appropriate annual timber target and therefore has presented 2 options in its recommendations to be included as separate alternatives, one of 35MMbf and one of 70MMbf.

3.

What we agree on:

- Provide sufficient resources in the first three years of the transition to complete a thorough analysis of young-growth inventory at the stand level to more accurately predict the Y-G timing and supply through to complete the transition.
- Transition from old-growth to young-growth in less than 15 years by making more young-growth available for harvest and substituting Y-G for O-G on a 1:1 volumetric basis, using the annual timber target.
- The annual timber target is set by the FS during the plan amendment process using its demand estimates as the committee produced two demand volumes (40MMbf and 70MMb) in its process.
- A post transition annual O-G timber harvest that will meet the long term demand of the small and micro-sale programs.
- The O-G timber base will be limited to the current definition of Phase 1 lands outside of TNC/Audubon conservation priority areas, TU 77 watersheds and Inventoried Roadless Areas.
- All large-scale O-G projects must be through Gate 4 by end of year 5. This can be extended to the end of year 8 if the 5 year review determines additional volume is needed to meet targets

What we will learn:

At the end of 5 years from the ROD of this plan amendment, experience will include:

- Implementation and Monitoring will have completed a review of FS performance on planning timber sales
- There will be 5 years' experience in planning Y-G timber sales aligned with the TAC recommendations that will improve the understanding of actual project net-downs and allow more accurate predictions of Y-G harvest timing and flow
- The improved inventory information will be available and integrated into the forecast of both the timing and volume of YG during the remaining period of the transition and set a target for old growth target to complete the transition.

What we will determine:

- Setting a defined timeline to the conclusion of large scale old growth planning and harvesting that aligns with the projected young growth resulting from improved inventory information
- Provide sufficient staff and other resources to plan and produce within 3 years adequate O-G volume to ensure that offered volume meets the determined supply target.
- Provide enough staff and other resources in 5 years to plan and produce sufficient Y-G volume to ensure the required volume through the transition that meets the determined target.